

Brunswick County Tourism Development Authority

December 6, 2016

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance: Bill Bernier, Glenda Browning, Bonnie Cox, Jerry Helms, Buddy Rudd, Eddie Walters. **Absent:** Maryann Azzato, Dana Fisher, Melaney Robbins, Whitney Sauls. **Also in Attendance:** Mitzi York, Executive Director; Brittany Dagenhart, Walker Marketing; Gary Walker, Walker Marketing, and Elaine Cheedle, Walker Marketing.

I. Call to Order:

Bonnie Cox called to order the TDA's regular monthly meeting at the Brunswick County TDA office at 712 Village Rd SW in Shallotte at 3:02 pm. She welcomed the representatives from Walker Marketing.

II. Public Comment:

No one requested to speak during the public comment period.

III. Approval of September 27, 2016 and October 25, 2016 Board Meeting Minutes:

A motion was made by Billy Bernier and seconded by Jerry Helms to approve the minutes of the September 27, 2016 and October 25, 2016 meetings. The motion was passed unanimously.

IV. Recommendations for Fund Balance Spring Media – Walker Marketing

Mitzi York advised that in the past several years the Board has appropriated additional funds for spring marketing after receipt of the audit. Gary Walker, Brittany Dagenhart and Elaine Cheedle are here to share recommendations for additional media. Mitzi York requested that the agency develop recommendations for an additional \$100,000 in media. The agency also has some recommendations for reallocating some media funds previously approved. For example at last month's meeting we discussed how Destination Travel and Golf did not produce the results we were hoping for and that we are going to reallocate those dollars.

Mitzi York turned over the presentation to Gary Walker. Gary Walker began by thanking the Board. The recommendations center on in-state travel providing the Board with two options. Brittany Dagenhart reviewed the presentation agenda. Elaine Cheedle provided the Board with a brief recap of the current media plan: 17 print insertions; 6.6 million digital impressions; VisitNC co-ops; 77K estimated print and digital leads plus 20,000 estimated golf leads; average cost per lead \$1.39. She reviewed the recommended changes to the existing media plan: cancel the Destination Travel and Golf spring eblasts; replace the Destination Travel & Golf golf ad with an ad in Golf Magazine; and shift Madden co-registration leads to additional Interfuse leads. The conversion study was very helpful in making these decisions. Another recommendation is to supplement the

Madden display campaign that was successful in driving qualified traffic to the website. It is currently funded at \$14 thousand. We would redirect money that was budgeted for the Mom Blogger network that is no longer available.

Brittany Dagenhart advised that the \$100,000 fund balance and the reallocation of existing funds total \$118,000. It is recommended that we reach our core North Carolina markets to educate and inspire for spring break and summer travel. It is also recommended that we layer in support in markets that have late school starts in Pennsylvania, New York and Virginia. Also based on some information from the conversion study, another recommendation is to enhance the wedding section of the website to provide additional inspirational content. Mitzi York added that for many of the wedding leads we are only getting emails so we can't send them a wedding guide but direct them to the website.

Elaine Cheedle reviewed the new recommended media. The first recommendation is to work with Time Warner Cable News in Charlotte, Raleigh and Greensboro. This channel is the default station when the TV is turned on and has local content like weather, news, and editorial segments. Ratings for that channel are very strong. We have exclusive sponsorship of Around Carolina travel segment. The TV spots would start mid-February and run to the end of April. She reviewed with the Board the map of coverage and showed a sample Around Carolina segment produced by Time Warner Cable. The weekly package includes 24 ten second open "billboards" per week. An added value of the buy would be 50+ Around Carolina promotional unit sponsor tags with our logo, image and tagline. There would also be banner ads adjacent to the Around Carolina segments housed on TWC.com for 11 weeks. We would have a total of 1,792 TV spots. The recommended budget allocation is \$38,250. Brittany Dagenhart advised that Walker Marketing would work with Time Warner Cable to develop two 30-second spots. We would track the spots with a unique campaign domain name. Walker will provide a script and existing assets to Time Warner to produce/edit the spots. To support the TV campaign we would allocate additional search dollars to coincide with the TV buy in the geographic areas that the spots are shown.

Elaine Cheedle reviewed the recommendation to capitalize on late school start dates in key markets with an Interfuse e-blast. Interfuse has a very large database and converted very well per the conversion study. The e-blast messaging would support late summer travel. Brittany Dagenhart discussed the recommendation to enhance the wedding pages on the website to feature more inspirational content to supplement the existing utility content.

Brittany Dagenhart also advised that the recommendation includes integrating print with the TV campaign by using a newspaper insert in the Charlotte Observer, Raleigh News and Observer, and Greensboro News & Record. Again a unique domain name would be used tracking website traffic. Elaine Cheedle

reviewed an alternative option to the newspaper insert of supplementing the with historically-successful tactics such as insertions in Better Homes & Gardens, Hearst, American Road, Recreation News, and Southern Living. Replace the Destination Travel and Golf ad with Golf Magazine March Golf South ad and bonus eblast (in either option) and addition of eblasts with Sherman's Travel and Interfuse. Elaine Cheedle reviewed the budgets for the two options Scenario 1 at \$118,098 and Scenario 2 at \$118,023.

Billy Bernier advised that golf is struggling at this time and said that golf could use some help. He likes that the options include Golf Magazine. Gary Walker noted that the newspaper insert is a high cost per thousand but asked that the Board consider it. The insert would be strategically placed in households that can afford to come here. Mitzi York added that the plus about the insert is that it can be targeted to compliment the TV campaign and that if we are concerned about golf we can include that in the copy. The downside is that it is expensive per thousand and harder to track than traditional media and that is why we have provided two options for the Board's consideration. Eddie Walters expressed concern that print media circulations are down and is a challenge. He is not sure that this is the best way to reach the consumer. Gary Walker added that these people pay to get the paper so they are still reading them. Billy Bernier added that newspapers are declining that the people who buy them still read them. Gary Walker advised that we want to make sure we have a good mix but that Eddie Walters made a good point. Jerry Helms asked for clarification on the households. Elaine Cheedle advised that it would be households with income over \$75,000. He also asked about the day of the insert. Elaine Cheedle advised that it would be a Sunday insert in the fold. Gary Walker advised that he would not recommend the insert for our regular budget but thinks that it is worth testing with the additional fund balance. Jerry Helms asked if we are doing any advertising online with those newspapers. Mitzi York replied that it is not in the budget. Elaine Cheedle is getting information about online advertising with the Raleigh News & Observer. Bonnie Cox asked about the length of the TV campaign and if there is a time limit. She asked if we could use the newspaper insert funds to increase the length of the TV campaign. Eddie Walters added that we see heavy bookings in January. Jerry Helms asked if we added money to the campaign to run longer could we change the message to address golf. Mitzi York advised that the proposal includes funds for 2 TV spots – one could be leisure and one could be golf. Brittany Dagenhart added that the promo spots offer another opportunity to promote golf. The consensus from the Board was to take the insert/print money to increase the TV campaign and to include leisure and golf. It is uncertain how much earlier we can push up the schedule to start the campaign because of production time. If we want to start in January, we will need to make a decision today. Mitzi York asked if the Board was okay with adding the print money to the TV campaign and allowing her to work out the details with Walker on timing and to cover leisure and golf. Eddie Walters pointed out that option 2 included the Sherman's Travel eblast and that would be good to keep. Jerry Helms motioned to

modify the options to combine the insert money to expand the TV campaign and if there are sufficient funds to include the Sherman's Travel eblast. Eddie Walters seconded the motion and the motion was passed unanimously.

V. Resolution establishing the 2017 schedule of meetings:

Mitzi York advised that the proposed schedule follows our practice for the past several years to meet on the fourth Tuesday of each month except for November/December when we have a meeting the first Tuesday of December. Jerry Helms motioned to approve the resolution seconded by Buddy Rudd. The motion was passed unanimously.

VII. Executive Director's Report:

Mitzi York reviewed the financial report for the month of September. Occupancy taxes shown were collected for the month of July. Revenues for September total \$414,741.97. Our largest expenditures for the month were media, agency fee and fulfillment. The agency fee is higher now than later in the year because the agency is now working on the vacation guide and ad creative. Fulfillment postage is high because we had a lot of leads. Expenditures totaled \$66,911.15 in actual expenses plus \$47,317.90 in accrued expenses. The ending bank balance was \$849,710.23. She also reviewed the financial statement for October. Revenues for October totaled \$273,974.72. Our major expenses were again media and agency fee. The \$7500 in Special Projects was the photo shoot from the summer. Mitzi York reviewed the occupancy tax report. We did receive additional funds from July. Last month we were showing July up 7% now it is over 12% up. August is down significantly but that is consistent with other coastal destinations. September is down however based on the report from the County we know that there are additional funds not reflected. Reports from the partners are that September was very strong so hopefully we will see an increase over last year. Eddie Walters asked if all funds are in for August. Mitzi York advised that we may see some more funds trickle in but she did not think it would be significant. Billy Bernier added that we took a hit for Labor Day because of the storm. Buddy Rudd motioned to accept the financial report seconded by Billy Bernier. The motion passed unanimously.

Mitzi York reported that the golf guide is completed. We have reviewed the final draft of the vacation guide which should go to the printer shortly. She advised the Board that we provided some photos to National Geographic Traveler and we do know that they will be including Sunset Beach in an article. We also provided photos and information to AAA Go for a round-up of good places to have a picnic. An item of note is that TripAdvisor included Holden Beach in their list of destination with "sky rocketing interest". We are working on a "best beaches" campaign. Because you can't pitch all the beaches as the best beach when sending to a "best beach round-up", we are attributing characteristics to the beaches so that hopefully they fit somebody's article – such as Sunset Beach is the best beach with a secret and Holden Beach is the best family beach etc. The State's media

mission which has historically been held in January is being held in April in 2017 because of the frequency of bad weather seen in January. Tomorrow Mitzi York is going to Raleigh for a meeting with North Carolina's Travel Industry Association's new lobbyists. She anticipates that the School Calendar Law will be a major topic of discussion. A report by the General Assembly research division on options related to the school calendar law will come out in January.

V. Marketing Committee Report

Mitzi York reviewed the Marketing report for October which was provided in the Board packets. In September we received 5,783 leads/request for guides including downloads and views. There were 26,824 unique visitors to our website and 20,859 views to the partner pages and from there 5,039 visits to our partners' websites. Pennsylvania was the top state for leads in September. Media in September included American Road Magazine, Bridal Guide, Hearst Great Getaway Guide, My Wedding, search and VisitNC. We have received 35,588 leads this fiscal year-to-date as compared to 48,798 last fiscal year. The lead count has a lot to do with the timing of media so hopefully we will catch back up in the spring. We had 26,824 unique visitors in September and 67,374 page views on the website. Comparing that to October of last year, the number of users was up 57% and page views up 58%. The bounce rate was slightly higher but traffic was much higher than October of last year. Organic search is the number one source to the website followed by direct traffic. Mitzi York pointed out the stats for the Destination Travel and Golf free email which drove traffic to the website but time on the site was limited. That is why we recommended dropping them from the media plan. The dynamic search ads top our list of keywords. Because several search words might fit into the dynamic search ad it is harder to determine what words people were using for their search. She will need to ask the agency for more information on how to track that. The Oyster Festival and Festival by the Sea were our top landing pages in October followed by our home page. The top state for traffic to our website was North Carolina. The top city was Charlotte.

Mitzi York advised that she has attended meetings related to the Wells Fargo Golf Tournament coming to Wilmington. She has been informed that when the tournament is in Charlotte that about 90% of all tournament goers come from 40 miles of Charlotte. They think that Wilmington might draw higher from outside the area than the 10% draw in Charlotte. She does not believe that the number will be high enough to warrant putting a lot of money into marketing related to the tournament – such as a tent. But we are buying a full page ad in the program which will also be distributed to Golfweek's distribution list. We are sponsoring along with New Hanover County, Pender County, Onslow County, Leland, and Jacksonville a media reception Wednesday night during the tournament. Approximately 200 media will be invited.

Mitzi York advised the Board that the Brunswick County Chamber requested segmented information on where occupancy taxes are collected. Information in

the County pdf report is not organized that way. She advised them it would be better to get the information directly from the towns. Eddie Walters said he would like to see how the towns who send money promoting tourism compare with the other towns but he can get that information from the individual towns.

VI. Old Business:

No old business.

VII. New Business:

Eddie Walters advised the Board that Sunset Beach rescinded its cabana ban last night. Bonnie Cox thanked Mitzi York for another wonderful year. She advised that the Personnel Committee met and recommends that she be awarded a \$2000 bonus. Bonnie Cox added that Mitzi York has worked very hard with the vacant third position. She asked that the Board join her in thanking Mitzi York for her dedicated service and really good work. Bonnie Cox asked for a vote on the committee recommendation. The recommendation was passed unanimously.

VIII. Adjourn:

Buddy Rudd motioned to adjourn, seconded by Eddie Walters. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 4:27 pm.

NEXT MEETING: December 6, 2016 at 3:00 pm at the TDA's offices in the Red Apple Building, 712 Village Rd SW Unit 105 in Shallotte.